Eparchius Avitus

(17 March 455 - 22 May 455)

SOURCES

No connected account of the reign of Avitus survives. One might have expected some detail from his son-in-law, Sidonius Apollinaris, but Sidonius' panegyric only takes Avitus' history up to his acclamation, and Sidonius otherwise says virtually nothing about Avitus' activities as emperor. Given the circumstances of Avitus' fall, and Sidonius' need to make his peace with those who had been responsible for it, this silence is perhaps no surprise. Other sources, such as the Spanish chronicler Hydatius and the Byzantine chronicler John of Antioch, provide some precious insights into Avitus' reign, and these must be fleshed out wherever possible by bits and snippets found in other sources.

FAMILY BACKGROUND AND EARLY CAREER

Eparchius Avitus, who was born of a senatorial family circa 395, was a native of the Auvergne in Gaul. His father may have been the Agricola who was consul in 421. Avitus was well educated, being eloquent and perhaps having had some legal training. He had at least three children, Agricola; Ecdicius, who later became Patrician and Master of Soldiers under Julius Nepos in 475; and Papianilla, who married Sidonius, himself a blue-blooded aristocrat of Lyons, the son and grandson of praetorian prefects of Gaul.

Avitus had a distinguished civil and military career. Around his early twenties, ca.415/420, he undertook a civic mission to the Master of Soldiers, and later emperor, Constantius, and early in his life he formed close contacts with the Visigothic court at Toulouse. He then served under Flavius Aëtius in several military posts, and by 437 may have risen to the office of Master of Soldiers in Gaul. Subsequently, he rose to become Praetorian Prefect of Gaul, perhaps ca. 439-440, in which capacity he was able to renegotiate the treaty with the Visigoths. He therefore provides an unusual example of a person obtaining both civil and military offices of very high rank. Avitus then seems to have indulged in the life of leisure to which every senator purported to aspire. Then, in 451, as a civilian, Avitus was influential in gaining the aid of the Visigoths against Attila and the Huns, who were subsequently defeated at the Battle of the Mauriac Plain. But he then returned to his estate, called Avitacum, at Clermont.

In 455, Avitus was appointed magister militum praesentalis ("Master of Soldiers in the Presence") by the short-lived emperor **Petronius Maximus** and was sent as an ambassador to the Visigoths, presumably to reconfirm them in their federate status. Assisted by a certain Messianus, he was successful. Sidonius recalled,

"The chiefs of the Visigoths were letting loose the war they had planned, when suddenly their fury was checked by tidings that Avitus, armed with an imperial writ, was already entering the home of the Goths, and, having laid aside for a little the pomp of the Master's office, had taken upon himself the authority of an ambassador.... The king and the Master took the stand together, the master with confident look, while the other ... sued for clemency... " (Carm.7.399-434: trans. Anderson, 1.153-155).

ACCESSION

After the news arrived of Maximus' death on 22 May and of the ensuing Vandal sack of Rome, Theoderic urged Avitus to assume the purple himself, asserting,

"We do not force this on you, but we say to you: With you as leader, I am a friend of Rome; with you as Emperor, I am her soldier. You are not stealing the sovereignty from anyone; no emperor holds the Latian hills, a palace without a master is yours... I would that your imperial diadem might bring me the means to do your service. My part is but to urge you, but if Gaul should compel you, as she has the right to do, the world would cherish your rule..."(Sid.Apoll. Carm. 7.510-518: Anderson trans., 1.163).

One might suspect, of course, that Theoderic's goals were not merely altruistic, and that he might have seen some benefits for himself and his people if Avitus were to become emperor.

Theoderic then seems to have accompanied Avitus to Arles, for Marius of Avenches reported, "Avitus was raised emperor in Gaul, and Theodoric, king of the Goths, entered Arles in peace with his brothers" ("levatus est Avitus imperator in gallias. Et ingressus est

Theodoricus rex Gothorum Arelatum cum fratribus suis in pace": nos.1-2). This ceremonial arrival of the Gothic royalty would have been a far cry from past occasions when the Goths had attempted to seize Arles by force of arms.

The requisite Gallic support was soon forthcoming. At a meeting of the "Council of the Seven Provinces" at Beaucaire, just outside Arles, the decision is made to name Avitus emperor, and three days later, on 9 or 10 July, the ceremony was carried out. Sidonius continued,

"Then a great clamor filled the hall of Beaucaire... Place, hour, and day are declared auspicious for the assumption of empire... The lords of the land assemble in haste and with the soldiers all around set him on a mound. There they crown their sorrowing chief with a torque and present him with the insignia of sovereignty... "(Carm.7.571-579: Anderson trans., 1.167).

Other sources are more concise. Hydatius tersely reported, "In this year, Avitus, a citizen of Gaul, was named emperor by the Gallic army and by the notables, first at Toulouse, then at Arles" ("ipso anno, in Galliis Avitus, Gallus civis, ab exercitu Gallicano et ab honoratis, primum Tolosae, dehinc apud Arelatum Augustus appelatus est": Chron.163). The Auctuarium Prosperi hauniensis stated, "After the murder of Maximus came Avitus, and, situated in Gaul at Arles, he assumed imperial authority on 9 July" ("post Maximi caedem Avitus ac situs in Galliis apud Arelas imperium sumpsit VII id. Iulias": no.5); the Fasti vindobonenses priores give a slightly different date, "and Avitus was acclaimed emperor in Gaul on 10 July" ("et levatus est imp. in Gallis Avitus VI idus Iulias": no.575). Cassiodorus noted simply, "After Maximus Avitus assumed imperial authority in Gaul" ("Post Maximus Avitus in Gallia sumit imperium": no.1264).

It also would seem that Avitus was recognized by the Senate in Rome well before his actual arrival there. Victor of Tonnena, for example, recorded, "On the seventy-fifth day after the [Vandal] capture [of Rome], Avitus, a man of complete simplicity, assumed the imperial power in Gaul" ("huius quoque captivitatis LXXV die Avitus vir totius simplicitatis in Galliis imperium sumit": s.a.455). Victor's date, which works out to 5 August, does not correlate with any of the other dates for Avitus' acclamation; perhaps it is the date his rule was acknowledged by the Senate in Rome; it is far too late, however, to be the date that news of his accession arrived in Rome. And Hydatius noted, "He was summoned and accepted as emperor by the Romans" ("a Romanis et evocatus et susceptus fuerat imperator": Chron.166; cf. 163, "Romam pergit et suscipitur"), which likewise could indicate that Avitus was recognized in Rome before his actual arrival in Italy. Such a conclusion also could be inferred from the Italian failure to name a different successor.

Avitus spent over three months in Gaul consolidating his resources in preparation for establishing his court in Rome. His authority was based largely on the support of the Goths; Sidonius recalled, "You knew that it was not possible to hide from the Gauls that with you as emperor, the Goths would be at their service" (Carm. 7.520-521). He seems to have raised other contingents of barbarian troops as well, all in preparation for his advance into Italy.

The Auctuarium Prosperi then continues, "And he entered Italy with his comrades in this appropriated honor on 21 September" ("Italiamque cum praesumpti honoris collegiis ingressus XI k. Oct.": no.7). An anti-Avitus bias can already be seen in the choice of words of this Italian source. It probably was on this journey that Avitus undertook some kind of initiative in the Danubian area. Sidonius recalled, "And his march alone recovered the Pannonias, lost for so many generations" (Carm. 7.589-690). Now, at this time the Danubian provinces were still in an uproar following the disintegration of the Hun Empire after the Battle of the Nedao River in 454. Avitus could have accomplished little of consequence here, especially as most of this territory was under the jurisdiction of the eastern emperor anyway. But it may be that Avitus took the opportunity during his journey at least to restore imperial authority in upper Danubian provinces such as Noricum, an area where Avitus had campaigned in his youth (Sid.Apoll. Carm. 7.233). Before his arrival at Rome, Avitus also seems to have stationed Remistus, a Visigoth whom he had made Patrician and Master of Soldiers, at Ravenna with a force of Goths. After the murder of Aëtius in 454, this office seems to have left vacant by both **Valentinian III** and **Petronius Maximus** out of a fear that a successor would inherit Aëtius' influence over the state. In this, it would turn out, they were only too correct.

REIGN

If Avitus were going to be able to consolidate his authority, he would have to conciliate several possible sources of opposition, including: 1) the Vandals, fresh from their sack of Rome; 2) Marcian (450-457), the legitimate emperor in Constantinople; 3) **Majorian** and Ricimer, the commanders of the Italian army; and 4) the Italian senators, who would have looked askance at any "foreign" emperor, and who were accustomed to controlling the high offices of state in their own interest.

One of Avitus' first actions was to seek recognition from Marcian. Hydatius, for example, reported, "Avitus sent ambassadors to Marcian regarding a sharing of the rule" ("Per Avitum ... legati ad Marcianum pro unanimitate mittuntur imperii": Chron.166). It is unclear whether or not Marcian ever did accept Avitus. Hyatius does in fact claim, "Marcian and Avitus make use of the principate of the Roman Empire in concord" ("Marcianus et Avitus concordes principatu Romani utuntur imperii": Chron. 169). But other considerations suggest that this "concord" might have fallen short of actual recognition. The clearest evidence against recognition is that in 456 the east and west each had their own consuls, Fl. Varanes and Fl. Iohannes in the east, and Avitus himself in the west, and neither recognized the other's.

As for the Vandals, Marcian had already taken it upon himself to try to deal with them. The contemporary Byzantine historian Priscus recounted,

"After Gaiseric sacked Rome and while Avitus was ruling, Marcian, the emperor of the eastern Romans, sent ambassadors to Gaiseric, the ruler of the Vandals, requesting that he keep away from the land of Italy... And, having accomplished nothing, the ambassadors returned to the east, for Gaiseric heeded none of the commands from Marcian..." (fr.24).

Avitus, too, attempted to deal with the Vandals by diplomatic means. Also according to Priscus, he dispatched an embassy to Gaiseric demanding that he abide by the treaty made in 442:

"And Avitus, the emperor of the western Romans, also sent an embassy himself to Gaiseric, reminding him of the old treaty, and saying that if he did not choose to abide by it, he too would make preparations, trusting to the domestic forces and the support of his allies" (fr.24).

The "domestic forces" presumably consisted of the Italian army of **Majorian** and Ricimer, whereas the "allies" would have been assorted barbarian federates that Avitus brought from Gaul. By this time, moreover, any Vandal raiding would have been terminated by the end of the sailing season in November.

Avitus also was engaged in activities in Spain. Hydatius notes, under the year 455, "Count Fronto was sent by the emperor Avitus as ambassador to the Suevi." But the primary imperial initiatives in Spain were in the hands of Avitus' ally, the Visigothic king Theoderic II. Hydatius continued,

"Likewise, ambassadors also were sent to the same people by Theoderic, king of the Goths, because he was loyal to the Roman Empire, in order that they might preserve the things promised in their sworn treaty with him just as with the Roman Empire, because they were joined in a single treaty of peace... ("similiter et a rege Gothorum Theodorico, quia fidus Romano esset imperio, legati ad eosdem mittuntur, ut tam secum quam cum Romano imperio, quia uno essent pacis foedere copulati, iurati foederis promissa servarent...": Chron. 170).

In this instance, Theoderic played upon his professed loyalty to Avitus and the imperial government and claimed to be acting in the name of the Roman state. When the Suevi replied by invading the Roman province of Tarraconensis, the Visigoths fulfilled their role as loyal federates: "Theodoric, king of the Goths, entered Spain with a huge army of his own, at the desire and command of emperor Avitus" ("Hispanias rex Gothorum Theodoricus, cum ingenti exercitu suo et cum voluntate et ordinatione Aviti imperatoris": Hydatius, Chron. 173). In 456, the Suevi were devastatingly defeated at the Battle of the Urbicus River, and -- claims to be acting in the name of the Roman government aside -- the Visigothic conquest of Spain had begun.

Meanwhile, for Avitus in Rome the year 456 had begun auspiciously. On 1 January, Avitus entered the consulate like any emperor beginning his first full year of rule. Sidonius, only about twenty-three years old, delivered the panegyric (Carm.7) and as a consequence had a statue erected in own his honor in the Forum of Trajan. Sidonius' poem, however, or at least its published version, only covered Avitus' career up to his accession. Addressing Rome, it concluded:

"He will restore Libya to you a fourth time in chains... it is easy to feel sure even now of what he can do by waging war, how he shall, time and again, bring nations under your yoke... that man who, as a subject shrank from the glorious omens of sovereignty... But now be of good cheer with such a man for emperor... Lo, this prince of riper years shall bring back youth to you whom child-princes have made old" (Carm.7.587-598: trans. Anderson, p.169)...

Even if Sidonius' rosy sentiments lifted Roman morale, they did nothing to deal with the very real problems that Avitus faced.

Meanwhile, early in the year, it seems, Marcian sent another embassy to Africa:

"And Marcian sent to Gaiseric further letters and the ambassador Bleda, who was a bishop of the heresy of Gaiseric... When he arrived in his presence and realized that Gaiseric was not going to give heed to his embassy, he broke forth into headstrong words, saying that it would not profit him if, carried away by his present prosperity, he should be prepared to rouse the emperor of the eastern Romans to war against him... But neither the reasonableness of the words spoken before in the embassy nor the fear of threats induced Gaiseric to think moderately, for he dismissed Bleda without success, and dispatching a force again to Sicily and to the neighboring part of Italy, he ravaged it all "(fr.24).

These renewed raids probably occurred in March, with the reopening of the sailing season. They provided Avitus with a means for keeping at least one of his Italian generals busy. Hydatius reported,

"At this time it was announced to king Theoderic [of the Visigoths] that through Avitus a great multitude of Vandals, which had set out from Carthage for Gaul and Italy with sixty ships, was destroyed after being trapped by Count Ricimer... In Corsica there was a slaughter of a multitude of Vandals" (Chron. 176-177).

Eventually, however, Avitus' Italian welcome wore thin. John of Antioch tells of his growing difficulties:

"When Avitus was emperor of Rome there was famine at the same time. The mob put the blame on Avitus and compelled him to dismiss from the city of the Romans his allies who had entered with him from Gaul. He also sent away the Goths whom he had brought for his own guard, after distributing money to them derived from public works whose bronze fittings he sold to merchants, for there was no gold in the royal treasuries. This removal of adornments from their city roused the Romans to revolt" (fr.202: Gordon trans., p.116).

This report not only indicates, again, that the aforementioned "allies" were barbarian forces that Avitus had brought from Gaul, but also makes clear that Avitus' barbarian soldiery included others than just Visigoths.

DEPOSITION

Eventually, this local unrest escalated into a military revolt, led by **Majorian** and Ricimer. It may be that the Italian high command, heartened by its recent victory over the Vandals and having thrown off the malaise of 455, was ready to reassert its own authority. Early in the fall of 456 Avitus was forced to depart Rome and attempt to return to Gaul. According to John of Antioch (*fr*.202):

"Majorian and Ricimer openly rebelled against Avitus, for they no longer feared the Goths, and Avitus, fearing internal disturbances and the hostilities of the Vandals, left Rome on the road to Gaul. Attacking him on the road, Majorian and Ricimer compelled [Avitus] to flee to a holy precinct, renounce his office, and remove his royal raiment. Majorian and his company did not withdraw until Avitus died of starvation. He had held the imperial office for eight months. Some say he was strangled. This was the end of Avitus' life and reign" (fr.202: Gordon trans., p.116).

John's account, however, has some problems. The length he gives for Avitus' reign is far too short, and he also expresses some uncertainty about the manner of Avitus' death, providing two different versions. He also leaves out some crucial information. Other sources help to clear up some of these inconsistencies.

For one thing, it would appear that an initial encounter between the rebels and Avitus' forces took place at Ravenna. The Fasti vindobonenses priores note, "The Patrician Remistus was killed at the Palace in Classis [at Ravenna] on 17 September" ("occisus est Remistus patricius in Palatio Classis XV kl. Octob.": no.579; cf. Auctuar. Prosp. haun. no.1, "Remistus patricius in Classe peremptus interiit XV k. Oct."). Remistus, who clearly had been a partisan of Avitus, then was replaced as Patrician and Master of Soldiers by Messianus, who had assisted Avitus in the conciliation of the Visigoths the previous year.

Avitus, meanwhile, had attempted to return to Gaul, doubtless with the intention of reassembling the troops that he had dismissed earlier. Hydatius recalled that in 456 the tribune Hesychius arrived in Gallicia in Spain, and announced that "as was noted above, a multitude of Vandals had been slain in Corsica, and that Avitus had gone from Rome to Arles in Gaul" ("id quod supra, in Corsica, caesam multitudinem Vandalorum, et Avitum de Italia ad Gallias Arelate successisse": Chron.177). If taken literally, this would mean that Avitus actually returned to Gaul after his retreat from Rome. This is, of course, possible, but it may be that Hesychius left for Spain only knowing that Avitus had departed Rome intending to return to Gaul, without actually knowing whether or not he had actually arrived there.

What is clear is that a month after the skirmish at Ravenna -- a period that would in fact have been long enough for Avitus to travel to Arles and then return to Italy with whatever forces he could muster -- a decisive battle was fought between Avitus and his adversaries at Piacenza. The Auctuarium Prosperi reports,

"The emperor Avitus entered Piacenza with the force of his allies, which the Master of Soldiers Ricimer encountered with the great strength of his own army. After battle had been joined, Avitus fled after a great slaughter of his own men. His life was spared and the bishop Eusebius [om Milan] changed him from an emperor into a bishop. Messianus, the Patrician of Avitus, was killed in this battle on 18 October ("Imperator Avitus Placentiam cum sociorum robore ingressus, quem cum magna vi exercitus magister militum Recimer excepit. commisso proelio Avitus cum magna suorum caede terga vertit, quem vitae reservatum Eusebius episcopus ex imperatore episcopum facit. interfectus in eo proelio Missianus patricius Aviti XV k. Novemb." (s.a.456).

The reference to the presence of Avitus' "allies", whom he clearly had earlier dismissed, again suggests that if Avitus did not, as Hydatius reported, actually return to Gaul, he at least was able to receive reinforcements prior to the final encounter.

As for other sources, the Fasti vindobonenses priores provide a slightly different date: "And on 17 October the emperor was taken captive at Piacenza by the Master of Soldiers Ricimer and his patrician Messianus was killed" ("et captivus est imp. Placentia a magis. mil. Ricimere et occisus est Messiam patricius eius XVI kl. Nov.": no.580); Cassiodorus simply noted, "Avitus relinquished his power at Piacenza" ("Placentiae deposuit Avitus imperium": Chron. 1266). And Victor of Tonnena clarified that Avitus was actually made bishop of, and not merely at, Piacenza: "The Patrician Ricimer overcame Avitus; sparing his innocence, he made him bishop of the city of Piacenza" ("Ricimirus patricius Avitum superat, cuius innocentiae parcens Placentiae civitatis episcopum facit": s.a.455).

Avitus, therefore, was stripped of his imperial dignity and forcibly consecrated bishop of Piacenza, the first time that this novel method was used to dispose of a deposed emperor. He had ruled for just over one year and three months (Chron.Gall. 511 no.625, "Avitus cum eo anno uno et m. III"; Continuatio ad Prosperum, "Inpartius Avitus ann. I mens.III").

AFTERMATH AND DEATH

Thus ended Avitus' reign, but not his life. As for what happened to Avitus later, Gregory of Tours records,

"Avitus, one of the senators and, as is clearly manifest, a citizen of the Auvergne, after he had become Roman emperor was expelled by the senators and ordained bishop of the city of Piacenza when he desired to act excessively. When he learned, however, that the

Senate, still indignant, wished to take his life, he set out for the basilica of St. Julian, the Arvernian martyr, with many offerings. But the course of his life was completed during the journey, and, having been brought to the village of Brioude, he was buried at the feet of the aforementioned martyr. Majorian succeeded him, and in Gaul Aegidius, a Roman, was made Master of Soldiers "("Avitus enim unus ex senatoribus et, valde manifestum est, cives Arvernus, cum Romanum ambisset imperium, luxoriose agere volens, a senatoribus proiectus, apud Placentiam urbem episcopus ordinatur. conperto autem, quod adhuc indignans senatus vita eum privare vellit, basilica sancti Iuliani Arverni martyris cum multis muneribus expetivit. sed impleto in itinere vitae cursu, obiit, delatusque ad Brivatensem vicum, ad pedes antedicti martyris est sepultus, cui Maiorianus successit. In Galliis autem Aegidius ex Romanis magister militum datus est": Historia Francorum 2.11).

Other sources, too, indicate that Avitus lived at least into 457. The Gallic Chronicle of 511, for example, notes under the year 457, "Marcian died, and Avitus was killed by Majorian, Count of the Domestics, at Placentia" ("Marcianus obiit, et Avitus occisus est a Maioriano comite domesticorum Placentiae": no.627-628). And Hydatius, who could serve as a virtual biographer of Avitus, is particularly emphatic, stating, under the year 457, which he also identified as Avitus' third regnal year, "Avitus, in the third year after he had been made emperor by the Gauls and by the Goths, loses the empire, destitute of the aid promised by the Goths, and also loses his life" ("Avitus, tertio anno posteaquam a Gallis et a Gothis factus fuerat imperator, caret imperio Gothorum promisso destitutus auxilio, caret et vita": Chron. 183).

Meanwhile, back in Gaul, there occurred sometime between the deposition of Avitus in October 456 and the end of 457 another Gallic attempt to seize the throne. Sidonius makes a cryptic reference to a "Marcellan conspiracy for seizing the diadem" ("de capessendo diademate coniuratio Marcellana": Epist. 1.11.6; the manuscript reading "Marcellana" is correct, not "Marcelliniana" or "Marcellini", to which it generally has been emended). The conspiracy somehow involved a person named Marcellus, of whom there are several attested in Gaul at this time, and it just may have involved an effort to put Avitus back on the throne -- the only other possibility, it would seem, being that an attempt was made to make some other, unknown, person emperor.

Avitus, therefore, not only lived on into 457, but, in some quarters, continued to be recognized as emperor. He also attempted to return to Gaul, although whether he actually made it there is unclear, for he soon died. And here one notes the differing roles assigned in the sources to Ricimer and **Majorian** in Avitus' downfall. Ricimer alone is given credit for Avitus' defeat at the the Battle of Piacenza (Auctuarium Prosperi, Fasti vindobonenses). **Majorian**, on the other hand, is the only individual who is blamed for Avitus' death, at some later time: the Gallic Chronicle of 511 places the event at Placentia after the death of Marcian in late January, 457; and John of Antioch claims that **Majorian** either starved or strangled Avitus after the latter's deposition. In light of Gregory's claim that Avitus died on the road home, one might speculate that just before or after reaching Gaul he may have been chased down by **Majorian**, who would have been intent on thwarting any Avitan revival. And Avitus' resultant death, coupled with **Majorian** nearby, may be what brought to an end the "Marcellan conspiracy."

EPILOGUE

Avitus' brief reign was the last significant attempt in the western empire to reverse the trend toward the Italianization of the empire. As a Gaul, he was never popular with Italy, and he was soon faced with opposition not only from the urban mob of Rome, but also, and presumably more seriously, from the Italian senators as well. Behind Gregory of Tours' claim that he was opposed by the senators for acting "excessively" ("luxoriose": Victorian commentators gave this word libidinous connotations, but that is not its primary meaning). Of course, for Italian senators Avitus' mere accession would have been excessive enough. But what is known of his pattern of appointments to imperial office would also have confirmed them in this impression.

For Avitus is known only to have appointed Gauls to office. Various hints provided by Sidonius and others suggest that, under Avitus, officials of the central administration may have included the Gauls Magnus of Narbonne as Master of Offices, Rusticius Helpidius Domnolus as Quaestor of the Sacred Palace, and Consentius of Narbonne as Caretaker of the Palace (cura palatii) and ambassador to Constantinople. The prestigious title of Patrician and Master of Soldiers, moreover, was given to two Gauls, Messianus and the Goth Remistus. Remistus also would have been the first barbarian named to this position. Avitus seems to have been particularly zealous about appointing Gauls to various entry-level and lower-level imperial positions. Individuals such as Catullinus, Eutropius, Hesychius, Avitus of Cottion, Petrus, and Sidonius himself were given the junior position of "Tribune and Notary"; and Agrippinus and Fronto were made military counts. In default of greater information, such a pattern can only be suggestive, but given the equal lack of evidence for any Italian appointments, one might suppose that Avitus' preference for Gauls in office was one of the reasons for opposition against him by the Italian senators.

Avitus' rule also provided the best opportunity for creating a coalition between Romans and barbarians. But in this case, his alliance with the Visigoths fell victim to Theoderic's own successes in Spain, and the resultant Visigothic failure to send assistance when he needed it the most. Avitus' failure indicates the degree to which the trend toward the disintegration of the western empire had become irreversible. Thomas Hodgkin pronounced an eloquent epitaph on Avitus' reign: "He was the keystone of a great and important political combination, a combination which, had it endured, would certainly have changed the face of Europe, and might have anticipated the Empire of Charles the Great in favour of a nobler nation than the Franks, and without the interposition of three centuries.

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